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## Exhibit at High gives fresh context for Georgia O'Keeffe, contemporaries

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Georgia O'Keeffe's bold florals and desert scenes hold a vital place in American modernism. They remain as striking today as they were 90 years ago, when the artist began to paint them.

O'Keeffe (1887-1986) is also known for her creative partnership with photographer Alfred Stieglitz, who is credited with successfully steering her career for three decades. But in the first quarter of the 20th century, promoting the work of female artists was a radical undertaking. An influential art dealer in New York, Stieglitz embraced the task. He was searching for the embodiment of his notion of the ultimate feminine voice — intuitive, childlike and, thus, closer to a "pure" creativity.



Archive Photos

### ART REVIEW

#### "Georgia O'Keeffe and the Women of the Stieglitz Circle"

Through May 4. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Tuesdays through Saturdays (until 8 p.m. Thursdays); noon-5 p.m.  
Sundays. High Museum of Art, 1280 Peachtree St., Atlanta. 404-733-4444; [www.high.org](http://www.high.org).

**Bottom line:** This rare look at early works by a modern master and those who paved the way for her emergence should not be missed.

In "Georgia O'Keeffe and the Women of the Stieglitz Circle," the High Museum of Art presents 90 works that cast the extraordinary pairing of O'Keeffe and Stieglitz in a new light. The result of a collaborative effort between the High and the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe, N.M., this exhibition taps major collections across the United States and abroad. It is an elegant, reflective and intimate exhibit that is not to be missed.

The show situates O'Keeffe's work in the context of paintings and photographs by five pioneering women Stieglitz encouraged and exhibited prior to O'Keeffe.

Pamela Colman Smith was the first woman artist Stieglitz gave a solo show. Her figurative watercolors reflect innocence and a preoccupation with mysticism, in vogue at the turn of the 20th century. Georgia Engelhard was mentored by Stieglitz as a child and later painted alongside O'Keeffe; certain of their works bear a striking resemblance. The light-infused paintings of Katharine Nash Rhoades are pastoral and tender in feeling, echoing the concept of woman-child that Stieglitz nurtured in his protégées.

Photographs by Gertrude Käsebier (circa 1900) delicately elaborate on maternal relationships, juxtaposing light and dark in painterly compositions. Anne Brigman's images (as early as

1906) are the most daring Stieglitz showed, celebrating female liberation and strength. She photographed herself in the nude, twisting and contorting her body, posed against gnarled branches in the Sierra Nevada.

Each of these accomplished women was a part of Stieglitz's circle. It was O'Keeffe, however, who ultimately fulfilled the vision of a gender-based, feminine modernism.

In the 1910s and 1920s, O'Keeffe's animated drawings and paintings blended abstraction and representation, as she expressed both her inner world and the natural environment she observed. Works executed in this period also reflect the practice of visualizing music while drawing and painting. Among these images are 1915's swirling, orange pastel, "Number 32 — Special" and 1918's "House with Tree — Green," a purposely simplified composition of childlike gesture.

"Series I — From the Plains" (1919) is a darkly atmospheric oil. "Red, Yellow and Black Streak" (1924) depicts a gorgeous vista with almost audible rhythm and intense color. Both paintings share stylistic affinity with Arthur Dove and Marsden Hartley (who were part of Stieglitz's male circle).



Georgia O'Keeffe, American (1897-1985), Red, Yellow and Black Streak, 1924. Oil on canvas, 50-3/8 x 31-3/4 inches. Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Gift of The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation, 1955. Photo: CMAA/ MMA/M. D'Al. Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY. © Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

Georgia O'Keeffe's "Red, Yellow and Black Streak" (1924)

Also among the 31 O'Keeffes to be savored are early flower paintings. "Untitled (Flower)" (1923) in velvety reds and the candy-colored "Pink Tulip" (1926) are luminous.

Stieglitz and O'Keeffe met in 1916, following his showing of 10 of her drawings. By 1918 the two were living together. They married in 1924.

A number of the most exquisite and widely recognized Stieglitz portraits of O'Keeffe, taken prior to their marriage, are also on view.

Curator Kathleen Pyne's book, "Modernism and the Feminine Voice: O'Keeffe and the Women of the Stieglitz Circle," is an illuminating, highly readable work on its own. Accompanying the exhibit, it addresses the art, the personal relationships and the fascinating milieu of cultural and social change to which these artists belonged.